

## Maxine by orphan\_account

**Series:** [Hey... \[2\]](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Angst, Anxiety, Comfort, F/M, Fluff, Insecurity, Max is wonderful, Mrs. Sinclair is the best mom ever, Neil is the worst dad ever, i love them all so much

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**Characters:** Erica Sinclair, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mr. Sinclair (Stranger Things), Mrs. Sinclair (Stranger Things), Neil Hargrove, Susan Hargrove

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**Summary:**

Max is having a bad day. Mrs. Sinclair makes it slightly more bearable.

## Maxine

### Author's Note:

Oops... I forgot to put very much Lumax in here. But there is Lucas's mom being the best human on the planet, so that's fun. It's a little rough around the edges, but it's also very fluffy.  
Enjoy!!!

“Hey!”

Max takes a deep breath and wills herself not to cry. She hasn't shed a tear in front of her stepfather yet, and she has no intention to start now.

“Look at me when I'm talking to you, little brat!”

She forces herself to shift her gaze from the floor to Neil's reddening face without letting any of the terror she's feeling show through her eyes. She can sense her mother stiffening behind her, but she knows that she'll get no help from there. Her mother hasn't once raised her voice to Neil. She's too scared.

In Max's opinion, being scared of him should have been a sign that marrying him was a bad idea, but whatever. She's never deluded herself into thinking that her mother is particularly bright.

“I've been hearing about some... unsavory company you've been keeping.”

“I don't know what you're talking about,” Max says coolly, because even though she knows exactly what he's talking about there's no way she's ever calling any member of the Party unsavory. (Weird, yes. Unsavory, no.)

“Don't play dumb with me,” Neil snaps, and she says nothing, because keeping her head down is the wisest course of action in this situation. “Billy tells me that you've been hanging around that n – ”

“Don't,” she interrupts, before she even knows she's going to do it, because keeping quiet is definitely the best idea to avoid his wrath but having her stepfather insult Lucas is worse than getting smacked.

“Don't say it.”

He steps back and raises his eyebrows.

“Well. You all for equality now? All about the - ”

“It just doesn't matter,” Max says, because it's true. She's never

understood why the color of someone's skin made them any different from anyone else. It's so dumb. They're just as smart and fun and cool as white people – in fact, in her experience, they've been even more so. In California, when her friends would make fun of them, she'd said nothing.

But that was it. She'd said *nothing*. She always says *nothing*, when whoever it is giving the insult intimidates her, and it's so stupid. She's let Billy toss around slurs like confetti, and Neil sneer at people they passed in the supermarket. She's let them terrorize Lucas, sending him conspicuous glares whenever they crossed paths. She's let it happen, and happen, and happen, and she's done with that.

"He's never going to amount to anything, you know," Neil says, dropping into his chair like that's the end of the conversation. "We're telling you to stay away for your own good."

"SHUT UP!" Max bellows, because that statement lit something inside her, something that's been flickering for a long time and is finally becoming a blaze. "My own good?" As if you actually cared about my own good, you son of a – "

"Maxine," her mother gasps, and Max whirls around to face her.

"You're almost as bad! You let them do whatever they want, say whatever they want, whatever... It's so dumb, Mom!" She turns back to face Neil, who is staring at her with something akin to astonishment. The expression on his face only fuels the fire. "Yeah, that's right. I have thoughts of my own. I'm capable of coming up with my own conclusions. And you know what? Lucas is my own good."

"Now, Maxine," Neil begins, apparently trying to be placating, and Max shakes her head.

"Nope. I'm done with you and your crap. Lucas is the kindest, nicest, best person ever, and he's funny, and he cares about me, and you're not keeping – "

"Please," Neil scoffs, "he only cares about one thing."

"That's right," Max says. "Me. He cares about me more than you and Mom put together." Her mother gasps like she's been struck, and Max feels a pang of guilt but pushes on. "You know what? I'm pretty sure he loves me, and you know what else? I love him too. And he asked me to be his girlfriend a couple weeks ago, and I said yes, and I'd like to see you do anything about it."

Neil stands up, towering above her, shaking with fury, but Max doesn't care anymore. She's done cowering from this idiot.

"I most certainly will do something about it," Neil growls. "For a start,

you can apologize to your mother, and then you can go to your room, where you'll be spending the next week."

"I have a better idea," Max says. "You can get over yourself and your stupid little prejudices, and I'm going over to Lucas's."

And before she can second-guess herself, before she can actually pay attention to how her knees are trembling and her heart is slamming in her throat and her head is whirling, she turns around and storms out the front door.

Neil screams for her to come back. She ignores him. Her mother is sobbing and saying her name. She ignores that, too. She picks up her skateboard, which she'd miraculously left outside for once, and leaves.

She cries. The whole way over to Lucas's, she cries, and she wants to go home – to her real home. She wants her dad to ask her what's wrong, and listen to her while she cries, and tell her that it's okay. She wants him to look at what life her mom has thrown them both into and be horrified. She wants him to tell her that she'll never have to worry about it again, that he'll move them both far away, away from the Hargroves that she wishes with all her heart she'd never met.

But then she cries harder, because if she moved far away she wouldn't be able to hang out with her friends, and she wants them, too. It's just not fair, and the more she thinks about it the more she cries, and she wants to leave but the more she wants to leave the guiltier she feels because she doesn't want to leave Lucas, or Dustin, or Will, or any of them. And it's just a complicated mess, and it's so unfair, and she wants Billy and Neil to leave and never come back, and she can't go home because Neil will be furious, and by the time she reaches the Sinclair's she's in the middle of what is essentially a panic attack.

She stops her board and stands, sobbing, in the middle of the sidewalk, because she can't go and knock on the door, not like this. She's so weak and pathetic. She disgusts herself, crying like some damsel in distress from a really lousy romance novel.

She should leave, she knows. She's sticking out like a sore thumb, the girl with the red hair and the even redder face, and she wants to leave but she can't leave because she can't breathe and she's honestly just a waste of space and –

"Shh. It's okay, honey. You're going to be okay."

At first she doesn't even notice the warm arms pulling her close to a soft chest, maybe because she's crying too hard, maybe because she's been imagining someone wrapping her up in their arms since Neil first started

yelling. Whatever the reason, she just keeps crying for a minute, until a soothing hand strokes her hair and she realizes with a start that she's in the warmest embrace she's ever had.

She lifts her puffy face, trying to sniffle the snot back into her nose, and looks up to meet the eyes of Lucas's mother.

"Hey, darlin'," Mrs. Sinclair says, smiling at her. "Welcome back."

Max feels slightly dizzy from lack of oxygen (crying takes a lot out of you, it turns out, especially if you're making up for all the other crying you haven't done over the last little while) and from surprise. This is not how she meant to meet Lucas's mother.

She says the first thing that comes to mind.

"Sorry."

Mrs. Sinclair keeps her hands around Max's waist, and Max almost starts crying all over again, because she feels safer than she's felt in a really long time, but she manages to regain her control as Mrs. Sinclair asks, voice laced with confusion, "Why?"

"Because..." Max feels dizzy all over again, and wrenches out of Lucas's mom's grip. "Because I'm standing here crying in the middle of your driveway, and I'm a mess, and I'm crying, and I'm really, really sorry. Don't..." Something Neil said a couple of weeks ago comes back to her, and she feels her eyes welling up with tears again. Dang it, she hates being this vulnerable. "Don't waste your time on me."

Lucas's mom's eyes are wide and full of some emotion Max can't quite place, and she thinks it looks a little like sorrow.

Seemingly ignoring what Max just said, Mrs. Sinclair reaches down and picks up Max's skateboard, places a gentle hand on her back, and steers her up the steps, saying, "Come on. I just finished boiling some water, and I've got some cookies in the jar. Let's make a cup of tea, and I can get to know you."

Mrs. Sinclair makes her tea, and Max doesn't say anything, because even though she normally prefers hot chocolate there's something about the gesture that makes her incapable of saying anything. She wants to drink tea with Lucas's mom.

After setting her up with a plate of cookies, her cup of tea, and a glass of milk ("To even things out," she said with a wink, and Max couldn't help smiling), Mrs. Sinclair sits down across from her, takes a sip from her own mug, and says, "Why don't we start from the beginning?"

"Okay," Max says, and she can feel herself tensing up. "Which beginning?"

"Whichever one you want," Lucas's mom says. "Why don't you start by

*telling me your name?"*

*She can do that.*

*"I'm Max," she says, and Mrs. Sinclair's face lights up.*

*"Max?" she says, looking delighted, and Max feels very warm, because no one gets this excited about her except for Lucas. "Max Mayfield?"*

*"That's me," she says, crunching off a bite of cookie. It's slightly gooey and very delicious.*

*"I've heard so much about you!" Mrs. Sinclair says. "Lucas never stops talking about his girlfriend." Max can feel herself turning bright red.*

*"You're not... um... mad, or anything, are you?"*

*"Mad?" Mrs. Sinclair looks bewildered. "Why on earth would I be mad? Lucas has a girlfriend – and a very pretty one, might I add."*

*She winks, and Max turns even brighter red, and wonders what on earth Lucas's mom sees in her swollen eyes and puffy face and runny nose to make her say that.*

*"I don't know. I just... I'm not exactly every mother's dream, you know?"*

*"Maxine," Lucas's mom says seriously, and for almost the first time in her life the sound of her given name doesn't make Max upset or disgusted or unhappy. The way Lucas's mom says it is the way she'd always imagined a mother should say her daughter's name, and she likes it. She thinks that she might use her actual name if more people said it like that. "You are wonderful. You are smart and beautiful, and you make my son unbelievably happy. You know what that means?" Max shrugs and shakes her head. "That means you are my dream, and I am very glad that you're Lucas's girlfriend. You are wonderful. Did you know that?"*

*Max is crying again. It happened somewhere between the two 'you are wonderful's, and it doesn't hurt.*

*As the tears run down her face, Max whispers, "Do you mean it?"*

*"Yes," Mrs. Sinclair says. "I mean it."*

*And then Max is really, truly crying, and Lucas's mom comes around the table and holds her close for the second time today, and Max clings to her because this is what she's been craving for years, but she never knew it.*

*When her tears run out, Max pulls back and wipes her eyes.*

*"Sorry," she sniffs. "I'm not making a super great impression."*

*"Hush," Mrs. Sinclair says. "You don't worry about any of that, you hear?"*

*"Okay," Max says, and she almost starts crying again. "Thank you. I'm not... um... I'm not normally like this."*

*"It's okay," Lucas's mom says, and unlike when her own mother says it Max can tell that she means it. "You're fine."*

*"I'm really not," Max says, and before she can even think about how strange it is that she's pouring out her heart to this complete stranger she's pouring out her feelings, and how she wants her dad and she hates the Hargroves and she can't help but be mad at her mom for marrying Neil, and how she's such a horrible person and she knows it but she doesn't know how to get better, and she's so scared that she'll hurt other people the way Billy has hurt her, and how much it hurts.*

*By the time she's done, there are tears in her eyes again. But when she looks up, so does Mrs. Sinclair, and she's so surprised that she momentarily forgets to be upset.*

*"Max," Lucas's mom begins.*

*"Maxine," Max blurts, and if the woman sitting across is surprised she's ten times more so. "I... it's okay. If you call me Maxine. I... I'd kind of like it."*

*She turns bright red again, and feels like an idiot and wonders if his mom is going to kick her out for being such a weirdo. Before she has enough time to freak out, Mrs. Sinclair smiles.*

*"Maxine," she says. "You are an incredible young lady. You are smart, and funny, and kind."*

*"Well..." Max begins, and Mrs. Sinclair shakes her head.*

*"I mean it," she says. "I've only known you for an hour, and I already know that I want to spend a lot more time with you. You're special, and no one who spends time with you will ever be wasting it."*

*Max realizes that she wasn't actually ignoring when she said not to waste her time.*

*She feels more pathetic than she did when she was crying on the driveway, but she can't help asking, "Really?"*

*"Really, really," Mrs. Sinclair says, and she's so sincere that Max can't help but believe her. "I'm glad I met you, Maxine."*

*"Me too," Max says, and she means it so much that she can't put it into words. She's so emotionally exhausted that she doesn't even try, and Mrs. Sinclair seems to understand, so she smiles at Max and retreats to her side of the table.*

*"These are really good cookies," Max says after a minute.*

*"Thank you," Mrs. Sinclair says, smiling. "If you want, I can teach you to make them sometime."*

*And that is why when Lucas gets home from working on his project at Dustin's he finds Max in his kitchen, wearing a flowered apron, laughing with his mom as they scooped cookies onto a baking sheet.*

*She senses him behind her (she also hears him gaping – he’s a very audible gaper) and turns around.*

*“What’s up, Stalker?”*

*His mother turns around and smiles at him.*

*“Hi, Lucas. How did the project go?”*

*“Uh... good,” Lucas says, sounding stunned, not that Max can blame him.*

*“Maxine and I have had a great afternoon,” Mrs. Sinclair continues, “but I’m sure I’ve tired her out. Why don’t you two go up to your room until dinner?”*

*Lucas’s eyebrows raise so high that Max is surprised they don’t stick to his hairline when his mother calls her Maxine, but he doesn’t comment.*

*“Okay,” he says. Max unties the apron and hangs it up on its hook in the cupboard, following him out of the kitchen. She pauses in the doorway, and he looks at her quizzically.*

*“I’ll be right there, okay?”*

*He shrugs, clearly deciding that the minds of women are beyond him.*

*“Okay,” he says, continuing up the stairs.*

*Max reenters the kitchen.*

*“I...”she starts, and then stops. There’s no way to say how thankful she is for this afternoon, for Mrs. Sinclair’s kindness, for how even though she’d only been a random girl sobbing in the driveway she’d still been taken in for tea and cookies. So she just says, “Thank... thank you.”*

*Mrs. Sinclair smiles broadly.*

*“Anytime, sweetheart.”*

*Max smiles back, though it’s a little shaky because of how strong her emotions are, and she leaves the kitchen and climbs the stairs.*

*Later that evening, as she’s laughing at some story Erica just told about Lucas and Lucas is glaring at Erica and Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair are chuckling softly, she is happy. She feels safe.*

*She belongs.*

*It is wonderful.*

### **Author's Note:**

I love the Sinclairs so much. They are wonderful and I'm so glad we got to meet them in S2.

Sorry about the lack of actual Lumax, but Max needed a mom, not a boyfriend. I hope you enjoyed it!



Have a fantabulous day!